



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Building Social and Emotional Skills in Pre- and Primary Schools Learners. A Curriculum-based Transformative Education Course

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Russian Federation

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

- the Sberbank's Charitable Foundation «Investment to the Future»
- Moscow City University
- Tolerance Center (The Federal Research and Methodology Center for Psychology and Tolerance Education)

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Social and emotional learning (SEL); life skills; school climate; teaching and learning toolkit; transformative education course; teachers, learners, parents; pre-primary and primary education; teacher preparation; learners' and parents' involvement.

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The SEL dedicated course proved to be highly effective in developing emotional intelligence and life skills in learners in pre- and primary educational settings. Schools that have introduced this course report better socialization of pupils, improved relationships among peers, more positive and friendly school climate, and even improved parent-child relationships.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Issue

One of the most frequently mentioned problems of modern schools is the lack of involvement of learners in the educational process, negativism, boredom, and anxiety prevailing in the classroom. Teachers often do not know how to cope with this lack of motivation for learning and use ineffective strategies to engage learners. As a result, pupils learn only a fraction of what they could have learned if they were better motivated, shared a different set of values and had relevant social and emotional skills. Building such skills not only contributes to better academic achievements, but also facilitates personal development, resilience, ability to adapt to changing circumstances and cope with daily challenges, happiness and success in different aspects of life.

Response

A comprehensive teaching and learning toolkit on Social and Emotional Learning has been developed to help pre- and primary school educators create an enabling learning environment, positive school climate and equip learners with skills necessary to navigate emotions, practice mindful engagement, exhibit pro-social behavior, set and achieve goals and better learn. The toolkit includes an age-specific curriculum, scripted lesson plans for pre- schoolers and for grades 1-4 of primary school and workbooks for learners. It is supplemented by readers (digests) for parents and educators on social and emotional development of children and sets of recommendations to develop children's abilities to understand themselves and others, regulate their emotional states and behavior, demonstrate empathy, make moral choices, enhance communication skills, self-determination and autonomy.

Results

Evaluations conducted across several settings showed that the integration of SEL dedicated courses helped learners improve their self-awareness and abilities to manage emotions, better communicate and build friendly relationships. As a result, their motivation to study has increased, psychological environment in the classroom improved and emotional burnout of teachers has decreased.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? *

This project began in 2016 with the development of a comprehensive teaching and learning toolkit on Social and Emotional Learning for pre- and primary school children aged 5 to 7 and 7 to 10 (grades 1-4).

The toolkit includes:

- a summary of theoretical foundations of the program describing the age characteristics of children;
- a manual for teachers with scripted lesson plans for each age/grade;
- workbooks for children of each age/grade with task for individual work in the classroom and tasks to complete at home together with adults;
- a board game "Palette of Emotions" for a group work in the classroom. Learners have to identify emotions presented on the cards with faces and put them in the right sequence following plot illustrations. There are also scenarios that provide recommendations how to use the game in the classroom.
- a set of posters, which support the development of emotion identification skills.
- recommendations for teachers on working with parents.

The achievement of the planned results is ensured by compliance with the following implementation principles:

- Interactivity. Children are actively engaged in the learning, participate in different activities.
- Practice-oriented learning. Children acquire necessary knowledge and skills through solving age-appropriate daily life problems.
- Individualized learning. The teacher can adapt the program to meet the individual needs of a child by creating an individualized learning plan.
- Sequential learning. Each year children gradually learn more complex content that responds to their changing needs and capabilities and builds on the previously acquired knowledge and skills.
- Positive approach. The program contains special practices, tools, techniques aimed at creating and maintaining a favorable psychological climate in a classroom and facilitating positive communication among learners.
- Flexibility and variability. The content of the toolkit allows teachers to plan classes depending on the needs of the group, learners' capabilities as well as teacher's readiness to use recommended approaches. Lesson plans include enough of different activities to allow teachers choose those that are most suitable for the group and will better facilitate learning objectives.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

Building Social and Emotional Skills in Pre- and Primary Schools Learners. A curriculum-based transformative education dedicated course. Developed by the Charitable Foundation "Investment to the Future" this dedicated course has been available free of charge to pre- and primary schools in the Russian Federation since 2016. So far, more than 1,000 educational organizations in 30 regions of the country participate in the program. It has transformed teaching and learning in a way to facilitate the development of social and emotional skills of more than 150,000 children aged from 5 to 10.

At its pilot phase the programme has been assessed by the Russian Academy of Education (RAE) to check its content, approaches and effectiveness and has been recommended for integration into pre- and primary school education.

The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation through its Center for the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children has recommended the toolkit to school teachers and psychologists.

Regular monitoring and assessment surveys among school managers, educators and learners found that the course implementation improves children socialization, their relationships in the classroom with peers and teachers, as well as within their families. Climate in the classroom becomes more positive and conducive to learning; as a result, learners demonstrate not only better social and emotional skills, resilience, and autonomy, but also better academic achievements.

Those institutions that deliver this course over several years have notably transformed their overall organizational culture, made it more open and readier for change and development.

In addition to formal surveys and data analysis, we regularly collect feedback from teachers, learners and their parents and pay close attention to all, even slightest changes in educational organizations, and encourage self-reflection of all participants to improve the programme implementation. Along with comments from experts on the toolkit materials, this informs our continuous work on the course improvement.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

The key triggers for transformative effect of this programme are the motivation, inspiration and technical expertise of teachers and support coming from the school administration.

The teacher preparation is designed in a way similar to teaching learners and works well. Once teachers undergo the (re-)development of their social and emotional skills, they learn how to manage their emotional state, become more resilient and understand what and how to teach children. So, upgrading teachers' emotional skills is even more important than providing them with concrete tools to work with children.

We also learnt that to measure the overall success of the programme it is not enough to monitor only social and emotional skills in learners, but it is important to measure changes in the educational environment of the school and learners' academic achievements.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice".

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

This dedicated course proved to be highly effective in developing emotional intelligence and life skills in learners in pre- and primary educational settings. Schools that have introduced this course report better socialization of pupils, improved relationships among peers, more positive and friendly school climate, and even improved parent-child relationships.

The course' strong feature is consistent involvement of parents as active participants in the program implementation. This approach creates more opportunities for the development of child's social and emotional skills not only at school but also at home.

Special components of the program, such as family tasks and joint parent-child activities, help organizing meaningful communication between parents and children and facilitate better development in younger children.

Approaches suggested by the programme can be used beyond the framework of the dedicated course. Using them during other classes and activities contributes to the creation and maintenance of a favorable climate in the classroom, as well as improved academic performance.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

-Website of the Charitable Foundation «Investment to the Future»: <https://vbudushee.ru/en/>

-The following presentation provides more information about this programme. It is available at this link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CmqmIjTcFsO4mjFywxeaGtLsFhVub80Z?usp=sharing>